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fragile soils, significant wildlife values, and significant cultural resources is occurring. Livestock grazing and minerals activities would not be restricted by recreation oriented management in the area.

A recreation activity management plan and a cultural resources management plan specifying the degree of protection and interpretive measures appropriate for the area would be prepared. These plans would include fire suppression guidelines designed to protect fragile soils and cultural resources by limiting surface disturbance.

L11-Isolated Tracts. 3,700 acres. These tracts would be managed for protection, maintenance, and enhancement of wildlife habitat, primarily for upland game birds. These tracts are covered by the existing Isolated Tracts HMP and contain breeding habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered, or candidate species, or substantial woody riparian vegetation.

The existing Isolated Tracts HMP would be revised to reflect changes in the number of tracts included. This modification would include fire suppression guidelines for protection of wildlife habitat on Isolated Tracts.

These areas would remain open to ORV use. Future ORV restrictions could occur on case-by-case basis if necessary to protect wildlife or wildlife habitat.

Livestock would be excluded from 821 acres of Isolated Tracts by fencing.

L11 areas would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan and would be under full fire suppression.

L12-Areas of Geologic Interest. 9,321 acres. These areas would be managed to preserve fragile geologic formations associated with caves. They contain the most natural caves outside of WSAs recommended suitable for wilderness designation. All proposed projects would be examined to ensure the formations are not adversely affected. No surface occupancy associated with mineral lease development would be allowed within 250 feet of fragile geologic formations or caves. To avoid possible adverse effects from increased public exposure, such as vandalism and removal of speleothems, access to caves would not be improved. The areas would remain open to ORV use.

A cave management plan would be prepared for these areas. This would include fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance near the geologic formations.

T1-Transfer. 35,699 acres. These areas would be available for transfer from Federal ownership. Transfer could be by sale, exchange, agricultural entry, or other means determined appropriate as *discussed on pages 3-15, 3-16, and E-1 to E-3*. Detailed examination would be conducted for these tracts

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prior to the final decision about transfer or type of transfer. Examinations would consider threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and other resource values. *Agricultural entry applications and other transfer proposals for these areas would be considered in the order received.*

As consistent with the resource management guidelines and general provisions for multiple use and transfer areas discussed earlier in this chapter, lands were included in T1 for Alternative B in the following situations.

1. Parcels of relatively low multiple use value that are:
 - outside of grazing allotments,
 - small grazing allotments or portions of allotments that would be difficult to manage for livestock, uneconomical to fence, with little or no potential for intensive grazing management or combination with adjacent allotments. These are generally odd-shaped, narrow "fingers" of public land.
 - isolated parcels.
2. Agricultural trespasses. The trespass would be settled prior to transfer.
3. Occupancy trespasses, where resource values are low and disposal of the tract would solve the trespass problem. The trespass would be settled prior to transfer.

Parcels meeting the above criteria were excluded from T1 in the following situations.

1. Parcels essential to ensure public access to BLM-administered public lands.
2. Parcels containing habitat for sensitive, threatened or endangered, or candidate species, or substantial woody riparian vegetation.
3. Parcels important to the movement of livestock.

T2-Transfer-Agricultural Entry. 44,337 acres. These areas would be available for transfer from Federal ownership under the agricultural land laws or *for local and State government needs or exchange*. Other types of transfers may occur only if agricultural entry transfers leave parcels in Federal ownership that are difficult to manage because of odd configuration, access problems, or lack of adequate facilities (fences, cattleguards, water, etc.). These resulting difficult-to-manage tracts could be transferred from Federal ownership by sale, exchange, or other means as determined appropriate as discussed under T1. *T2 areas found to be unsuitable for transfer under the agricultural land laws and not falling into the T1 category as described in the preceding sentence, would remain in public ownership and be managed as described for M1 areas.*

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Up to 25 percent of the T2 areas could be retained in public ownership and managed as L11 areas under the Isolated Tracts HMP. Criteria to be used in selecting these areas are contained in Appendix C. The areas would be selected on a case-by-case basis as T2 lands are considered for transfer.

Studies to determine suitability under the agricultural land laws include economic feasibility, physical suitability for agriculture, water availability, threatened and endangered species clearance, and cultural resource clearance.

In some cases, small parcels adjacent to agricultural applications were included in T2 if transfer of the application would make the small adjacent parcel difficult to manage as described above.

As consistent with the resource management guidelines and general provisions for multiple use and transfer areas discussed earlier in this chapter, lands were included in T2 for Alternative B in the following situations.

1. An agricultural application for the tract has been filed.
2. The tract does not meet the requirements for inclusion in another transfer category such as T1 or T3.
3. Soils on the tract are marginal or suitable for agriculture as defined in Chapter 3 and Shown on Map 12.

Parcels meeting the above criteria were excluded from T2 in the following situations.

1. Parcels essential to ensure public access to BLM-administered public lands.
2. Parcels important to the movement of livestock.
3. Parcels containing breeding habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered, or candidate species, or substantial woody riparian vegetation.

T3-Jerome County Canyon Rim Transfer. 258 acres. This area would be available for transfer from Federal ownership as described for T1, but only if zoning regulations were changed to allow commercial or residential development.

Parcels were included in T3 in the same situations as discussed for T1.

Other Resource Uses in Alternative B.

Fire Management. Portions of the planning area, totalling 174,933 acres, would be under full fire suppression in Alternative B. Vineyard Creek ACEC

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(L6) and Box Canyon ACEC (L7) would be under full suppression to protect the naturalness and scenic quality of the areas. The Isolated Tracts (L11) and Pronghorn Winter Range HMP area (discussed below under Wildlife Habitat) would be under full suppression to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. The areas discussed above would also be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan.

The remainder of the planning area would be covered by a limited suppression plan. The purpose of this plan would be to more efficiently use fire suppression funds. However, since the planning area is subject to large fires, limited suppression would only take place when the burning index is below 22. This would typically require full suppression during July and August. Large, repeated fires cannot be tolerated from the wildlife habitat and soil erosion standpoint.

The General Fire Suppression Guidelines in Appendix B under "Standard Operating Procedures" would apply to most of the planning area. Exceptions to these would occur in portions of the planning area totalling at least 252,820 acres. ^{1/} Surface disturbing equipment would be more likely to be used in Isolated Tracts (L11), Pronghorn Winter Range HMP areas (see Map 15), and brush protection areas to protect the vegetation, primarily brush, important to wildlife habitat management objectives. On the other hand, use of surface disturbing equipment would be very limited in WSAs recommended suitable (L1) to protect wilderness character, in Cedar Fields SRMA (L10) to protect fragile soils and cultural resources, in the Oregon Trail area and Devil's Corral (L9a) to protect cultural resources, and in the Areas of Geologic Interest (L12) to protect fragile geologic formations. Guidelines for fire suppression in the above areas would be included in the fire management plan.

Prescribed fire could be used as a tool for accomplishing the 19,000 acres of brush control proposed under Livestock Forage. The guidelines for Prescribed Fire in Appendix D under "Range Improvements" would apply. The use of prescribed fire in areas other than those proposed for brush control would be allowed only if found to be environmentally acceptable through consideration of environmental effects in the NEPA process. Such use could include projects such as noxious weed abatement or habitat management not foreseen at this time.

Prescribed fire would not be used in Vineyard Creek ACEC (L6) or Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC (L7).

In Alternative B, 60 miles of roads would be maintained annually to improve access for fire suppression forces, and provide secure fuel breaks that could be used for firelines. This would cost approximately \$6,000 annually. The roads to be maintained are presently very rough and/or infrequently used. Vegetation growing in the roadways limits their usefulness as fire lines. The objective of this road maintenance is to help suppression crews keep fires smaller. This would benefit the wildlife habitat and soil erosion situation greatly.

^{1/} The acreage involved in the brush protection areas and the Oregon Trail area is unknown at this time and would be determined in detailed examinations.

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For Alternative B, roads would be maintained in Fire Ecology Zone 1 (refer to Map 6) and the contiguous BLM-administered lands between Shoshone and Wendell (refer to Map 1). These areas are very fire prone and large portions of the areas lack good access roads.

Although other management practices to reduce wildfire size and occurrence are not proposed for Alternative B, they could be considered in the future as availability and effectiveness are demonstrated. Such practices might include seeding of fire resistant plant species in strips. The environmental effects of any such practices would be considered in the NEPA process before the practices could be implemented.

Wildlife Habitat. Several wildlife habitat objectives have been covered under the discussion of multiple use areas for Alternative B. Habitat objectives for the hybrid trout are covered under L6-Vineyard Creek ACEC; for the Shoshone sculpin, they are covered under L7-Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC; for the Bliss Rapids snail, they are covered under both L6 and L7; for ring-necked pheasant and gray partridge (upland game birds), they are covered under L11-Isolated Tracts. The discussion in Fire Management above specifies actions that would benefit wildlife. Following is a discussion of other wildlife habitat objectives for Alternative B.

Brush areas valuable to wildlife would be given priority for fire suppression in the fire management plan. Specific areas of importance would be identified in detailed examinations and development of HMPs discussed below. Guidelines for fire suppression would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan. Protection of brush pockets would be important in maintaining or enhancing habitat for sage grouse, pronghorn, mule deer, and non-game wildlife. It should be noted that areas of brush valuable to wildlife would likely change over time as some brush stands are burned by wildfire while others recover.

Artificial nest structures would be constructed for the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, and burrowing owl to increase populations. Specific numbers and locations of these structures would be determined in detailed examination of habitat suitable for each species. Ferruginous hawk nest structures would be placed in remote areas. Swainson's hawk nest structures would be placed on Isolated Tracts (L11). Burrowing owl nest boxes would be placed primarily on Isolated Tracts, but also throughout the breeding range.

A Sage Grouse HMP would be prepared to guide management in the sage grouse winter habitat area covering about 67,000 acres (see Map 7). Objectives of this HMP would be to maintain and enhance sage grouse habitat by maintaining adequate, suitable areas of brush and providing additional forbs for brood rearing. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Winter Range HMP would be prepared for approximately 171,000 acres shown on Map 15. Objectives of this HMP would be to improve winter habitat for pronghorn by protecting valuable brush stands and increasing the brush

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component of the areas. Detailed examination would be required to determine the specific areas most important to the wintering animals. The possibility of seeding brush or fire resistant plant species would be examined for feasibility. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

A Pronghorn Summer Range HMP would be prepared for 60,000 acres in the Wildhorse Allotment (see Map 9). Objectives of this HMP would be to improve summer habitat for pronghorn by maintaining adequate areas of brush, providing additional forbs, and providing new water sources. Suitable forbs would be included in range seedings in this area. Guidelines for providing additional water sources would be developed. Guidelines for fire suppression to protect brush would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Livestock Forage. Provide 149,977 AUMs of livestock forage. Approximately 841,751 acres of public land would be included in grazing allotments (see Maps 1 and 9). Average stocking rate would be 5.6 acres per AUM.

The objectives for Alternative B would be to maintain existing perennial forage plants, maintain soil stability, stabilize areas currently in downward trend, and increase availability of perennial forage plants.

The following range improvements would be accomplished in support of achieving the objectives stated above.

- 55,500 acres of reseeding
- 19,000 acres of brush control
- 55 miles of fencing
- 100 miles of pipeline
- 124 water troughs
- 9 wells
- 27 cattleguards
- 17 miles of road construction

Total cost of improvements = \$2,522,200
20-year maintenance and replacement cost = \$842,700

In Alternative B, preference levels were adjusted as follows.

1. Allotments with upward trend in all pastures were given an increase.
2. Allotments with static trend pastures were given an increase if reasonable improvements to support the increase can be made.
3. Allotments with downward trend in all pastures were not given increases since range improvements might be necessary just to support current actual use levels. If improvements to support current actual use levels would not be reasonable, allotments with downward trend in all pastures were given a decrease.

Increases could be up to full preference or beyond depending on trend, actual use, and feasibility of range improvements. Proposed increases would

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be partially carried by range improvements in some allotments, by existing forage production and facilities in others. No grazing preference was proposed on lands in a transfer category or on Isolated Tracts that are or would be fenced to exclude livestock. A more detailed discussion of the methodology used in determining the stocking level for Alternative B is contained in Appendix D under "Determining the Proposed Stocking Rate."

The grazing preference level proposed for Alternative B assumes an optimistic future funding level for implementation of range improvements. Some of the proposed improvements would likely yield a benefit/cost ratio of less than one. Seeding is proposed only in areas considered to be seedable based on the rock content of the soils, but without further consideration of potential productivity of the soils.

The proposed stocking level of 149,977 AUMs is 53 percent higher than the current five-year average actual use and slightly higher than the current active preference, but it would be supported on 7 percent less land. There are several reasons why this stocking level was chosen.

- Alternative B goals favor higher stocking levels.
- The methodology used to determine the proposed stocking level indicates that the objectives for livestock forage can be met at this stocking level with the range improvements listed above.
- Although the current rate of 34 percent nonuse may continue into the future, the exact rate of nonuse is unpredictable. Actual use is tied to market conditions and other factors, such as weather. Thus, if Alternative B were implemented, the proposed stocking level of 149,977 AUMs may or may not be fully utilized. The full stocking level of 149,977 AUMs is used for analysis of the environmental effects in the event it were fully utilized.
- The proposed stocking level of 149,977 AUMs for Alternative B could not be supported in a drought year when forage production from annual plant species is low. This would be handled by temporary suspension.

The initial stocking level for Alternative B would be 149,135 AUMs (present active preference). Adjustments toward the proposed preference, 149,977 AUMs, would occur based on monitoring data, as discussed under "Implementation" in Appendix D. Increases dependent on range improvements would occur only as funding for the necessary improvements is available and the projects are completed. Range improvement guidelines are included in Appendix D. Decreases resulting from land transfers would occur only as the identified tracts are transferred from Federal ownership.

No changes in season of livestock use are proposed in Alternative B. This is because no resource conflicts were identified that would be resolved by such changes. However, changes in season of livestock use could be made in the future after considering environmental effects in the NEPA process if supported by monitoring.

New AMPs or CRMPs would be developed for nine allotments. This would bring the total area covered to 97 percent of the allotted acres.

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In Alternative B, it is assumed that 22,860 sheep AUMs would be converted to cattle AUMs. Actual conversion would be allowed consistent with the Shoshone District Conversion Policy. The assumed conversion is based on the following.

1. 50 percent conversion of spring sheep preference to cattle preference would be allowed in allotments without conversion guidelines in existing AMPs.
2. Fall sheep preference would not be converted to cattle preference unless an existing AMP specifies otherwise.
3. Conversion guidelines in existing AMPs would be followed.
4. The maximum conversion allowed by the factors listed above would occur.

Cultural Resources. In addition to the Cultural Resource Management Plans discussed for Devil's Corral (L9a) and the Cedar Fields SRMA (L10), two other plans would be prepared; one for the Oregon Trail and one for Wilson Butte Cave. These plans would specify the degree of protection and the interpretation measures appropriate for the areas. In the case of the Oregon Trail, fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed and incorporated into the fire management plan.

Soils. Several actions have been discussed which would help meet the objective of keeping soil erosion within tolerable levels. ORV use would be restricted in portions of the Snake River Rim SRMA (L9) and in the Cedar Fields SRMA to protect fragile soils. Fires would be given full suppression when the burning index is above 22 to help protect soils. Road maintenance would be conducted in key areas to help keep fires smaller, thus helping to protect soils. *Fire suppression guidelines to limit surface disturbance would be developed for the Cedar Fields SRMA.*

In addition to the actions listed above, areas with severe erosion problems would be stabilized. At the present time, 150 acres of active sand dunes in the Lake Walcott area have been identified for a seeding project to stabilize the dunes. Other areas would be treated as they are identified, provided treatment would be feasible.

Priority would be given to emergency treatment of severe erosion areas caused by wildfire.

Summary of Activity Plans Required for Implementation of Alternative B.

Two Wilderness Management Plans (excluding Great Rift)
- One for each WSA recommended suitable.